



# News Release

Office of the Louisiana State Fire Marshal  
5150 Florida Boulevard  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

---

---

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: "[www.dps.state.la.us/sfm/](http://www.dps.state.la.us/sfm/)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
RELEASE NUMBER: 0102-010921-14  
DATE: September 21, 2001

CONTACT: MARC REECH  
PH: 225-925-4911  
FAX: 225-929-7795

## **The Fire Alarm Goes Off – WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO??**

**Fire Marshal's Office Urges IMMEDIATE RESPONSE to Fire/ Emergency Alarms**

**BATON ROUGE** – The fire alarm sounds! Or, a warning to evacuate is broadcast throughout your building! “Oh no,” you say, “another false alarm.” Are you going to finish your chore, your chapter, or your shopping, waiting for the actual smell of smoke? Or are you going to safely **GET OUT OF THE BUILDING**? What are **YOU** going to do?

The Office of the State Fire Marshal urges that you immediately **HEED THE ALARM** and **EVACUATE THE BUILDING**. “Alarms are put into buildings to save lives and should never be ignored, said Fire Marshal V. J. Bella. “I don’t give a damn if you’ve had ten false alarms – you’ve got to get out of the building.”

Life in the United States changed dramatically on September 11, 2001. “No longer can we afford to be complacent about our way of life, our security, or our safety,” said Fire Marshal V. J. Bella. “Tragically, thousands of Americans were killed or injured at the World Trade Center; hundreds at the Pentagon. But many more thousands got out of those buildings safely. Those many thousands got out because they had a plan, and they followed it.”

Fire Alarms and evacuation plans are required features in many buildings, and are of particular importance in residential-type occupancies such as hotels and dormitories, schools, hospitals and nursing homes, and in buildings that house large numbers of people. “Sure, fire alarms sometimes activate when there is no actual fire,” said Fire Marshal Bella, “but in many cases the activation is the result of the alarm system doing its job. Smoke detectors may activate due to dust from renovation work, steam from a bath or shower area, or someone may leave their popcorn in the microwave too long. The detectors sense this and activate. Was there a fire? No, but the system was doing its job. **However, alarms that result from malfunctioning systems or those alarms that are maliciously initiated needlessly endanger the public and the responding Fire/Police personnel, and ultimately breed a sense of complacency in the building(s) occupants.**”

“In this day and age, the public can no longer tolerate alarm systems that continually activate due to lack of maintenance or improper installation, nor can the public tolerate the behavior of individuals that maliciously set-off Fire Alarms,” said Mr. Bella. “Unfortunately, there are people that think setting off fire alarms is great fun, particularly in college

\*\*\* MORE MORE MORE \*\*\*

dormitories. **In reality, it is criminal conduct punishable by six (6) months in jail and a fine of \$500” (LA R.S. 14:59, A,2).** “Further,” stated Mr. Bella, “this type of conduct puts the public at risk as well as the personnel of the Fire Service and police that are responding to the alarm. It can also delay emergency response to a real emergency where lives are at stake. What is worse is that people start becoming immune to the sound of the alarm.”

## **SO, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?**

1. If you are a building owner/manager/tenant that has been experiencing alarm problems, have those problems resolved. Multiple false alarms send the wrong message to the occupants of your building. It is for your safety and the safety of the building’s occupants that activation of a fire alarm is given the respect and attention it is due. It is important for you to maintain your system in proper working order. The cause of a false alarm should be determined immediately, as well as any repairs that may be required. Your building might not be prettier, but it will be safer.
2. If you are a prankster that thinks setting off a fire or smoke alarm is great fun, then it is time for you to think again. Your actions, at the least, are against the law. At the worst, they can kill.
3. Everyone else – Avoid carelessness. Workers need to be aware of conditions that will likely set off a fire alarm or smoke detector. Do not overload circuits. Do not leave cooking food unattended. Make it a fulltime part of your life to practice safety in the home and the workplace. Know how to safely exit your building/ be familiar with your building’s evacuation plan, and develop a Home Escape Plan for your family. Pay attention to the location of fire protection equipment and alarm devices. Avoid panic and call 911 if you detect an emergency situation. When an alarm sounds, do not use the elevator and do not assume it is a drill or an alarm test **AND -**

## **HEED THE ALARM!!**

### **WHEN THE ALARM SOUNDS, LEAVE THE BUILDING IMMEDIATELY –**

### **EVEN IF SOMEONE ELSE TELLS YOU IT IS A FALSE ALARM.**

“Times have indeed changed, and so must we,” advised Mr. Bella. “Americans can’t take safety and security for granted. We can’t be complacent. The main business of the Fire Marshal’s Office is enforcement of the NFPA 101 Life Safety Code, but in today’s America, Life Safety has become a part of everyone’s life. So, today I am asking the citizens of Louisiana to ‘get serious’ about their own safety and security. Make sure that alarm system(s) in your building work properly. Insist that they do. Turn in the pranksters and testify against them. Know how to exit your building safely, and develop a Home Escape Plan for your family. And, most importantly, **HEED THE ALARM**”.

Further safety information, as well as guidelines for the development of Evacuation Plans may be obtained on the Fire Marshal’s website at: “**[www.state.la.us/sfm/](http://www.state.la.us/sfm/)**”

\*\*\* END END END \*\*\*